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VII — *A Knight Ther Was*

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No picture in all the wonderful gallery of portraits through which one passes to reach the Canterbury Tales has awakened more interest or fastened itself more firmly in the minds of men than that figure of the "verray, parfit, gentil knight" which stands just at the entrance to the gallery. His picturesque career, his devotion to the knightly ideals of "trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye," his simplicity and gentleness, his unfailing tenderness of the feelings of others — "he never yet no vileynye ne sayde in al his lif unto no maner wight," — his eager haste to perform the pilgrimage he had vowed, which caused him on that unforgettable April morning to join Geoffrey Chaucer and his chance acquaintances, despite his stained gipoun, — all these things live in our memories as the features of one whom we have seen and known. It is not my purpose to erase or alter a single line in this well-known portrait. I have not asked you to listen to me because I have discovered some scandal in the life of the "gentil knight" — some dark secret which after five hundred years has come to light to make us pity his trustful friends and that guileless poet who chanced to meet and love him on the road to Canterbury. If one knew such a secret, one would hesitate long before admitting the claims of historic truth. But I do not. My task, if not so simple, is at least more agreeable. It seems to me that this portrait — like all the others in this and other ancient galleries — has faded a little, that time has taken away the richness of coloring which was such a wonder and delight to the contemporaries of the artist and left us only line and hints of light and shade. I do not wish to retouch the portrait, to spoil it with crude bright modern colors, but, if possible, to apply to it a "reviver" made of extracts from certain old documents and restore a part, at least, of the color and tone of the original.

When Chaucer painted this portrait, the figure which served him as model and the ideals which it embodied were already doomed. Gunpowder and cannon had come to take away the occupation and the prestige of the knight, and almost exactly at the same time Genoa and Venice had given the first great demonstration that "business is business" and that the ideals of chivalry must give way to the ideals of commerce. The doom was, of course, as yet unrecognized. The triumphs of cannon and of commerce seemed only the miserable petty triumphs of the vulgar, the common, the undignified. But the uncanny magic of fate was over the whole doomed system of chivalry, and, as always happens to a doomed system, the flame of devotion flared wider and higher and burned for a moment with unwonted intensity and purity. Knighthood was no longer a mere feudal obligation, it had become an ever-alluring ideal; men fought not because they must, but because they might; and the conditions of the time gave to the ideal all the inspiration of religious fervor and all the enticements of contact with the unknown, the mysterious, the unsearchable.

The battles in which the knight had been engaged were all battles against the infidels. That they had the sanction of the Church was, no doubt, by no means a minor consideration in the fourteenth century, but the prime element in their fascination for Chaucer's audience was undoubtedly that they were all fought, as we may say, on the very confines of the civilized world. The small group of nations who in the west of Europe represented Christian civilization and who, despite their jealousies and quarrels, knew and understood one another so well, were shut in on the west by an apparently infinite ocean which constantly stimulated the imagination to tales of fairy lands beyond or beneath it where women were beautiful and loving and faithful and mortal men became immortal; and on the south and east and northeast were peoples scarcely less romantic and mysterious than the fairy peoples of the "land of the undying."¹ On the south and

¹ The placing of the Celtic Other-world in the same category with the Orient is not a rhetorical device. Mediaeval imaginative literature shows in almost

east were Moors and Arabs, possessors of a more elaborate and more highly ornamented architecture, of a finer craftsmanship in swords and armor, in tapestries and silks and carpets, in spices and perfumes and all the luxuries of life, of deeper cunning in mathematics and medicine and philosophy and a world of mysterious sciences derived from Aristotle and Pythagoras and Hippocrates and nameless "masters of those who know." Behind the Saracens on the east and already pressing beyond them into Russia on the northeast were the even more mysterious Tartars and Turks, who, coming without warning from the unknown heart of Asia, brought with them all the mysterious associations of India and China. To us the tale which the young squire heard from some knight who had fought in the East, — the tale he left half-told — "the story of Cambuscan bold and of the wondrous steed of brass," of the magic ring and sword and mirror, is a curious and interesting flight of the oriental imagination; to Chaucer's contemporaries — fresh from the veracious narratives of Sir John Mandeville — it was probably a strange but credible transcript of life beyond the Christian pale. Somewhere in the remote east, they believed, ruled that mysterious sovereign Prester John, and near his empire lay the sandy sea, the floating islands, the lands of the dog-faced men, of the "anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders."

Associations and ideas such as I have tried to indicate were aroused in the minds of Chaucer's contemporaries by the mere recital of the names of cities and lands where the knight had fought. And in almost every instance the campaigns had not only attracted adventurous spirits from all parts of the Christian world, but had been sufficiently brilliant or long-continued to furnish matter for wonder and admiration for many long years. The two years' siege of Algezir, the sudden capture of Alexandria, were events that could not soon be forgotten even had they occurred in our own day, when the newspapers overwhelm us daily with reports of every volume the mingling of East and West in all ideas that lay beyond the central realm of sober experience.

more events, significant or trifling, than came to the knowledge of Chaucer and his contemporaries in a decade. To the men of that quiet time they furnished recollections and conversation for a whole generation.

The campaigns ascribed to the knight form three groups. The first in order of time is probably the group composed of the siege of Algezir, the raids in Belmarye, and the mortal combats in the lists in Tramissene. All of these, of course, are events in the long struggle to drive the Moors out of Spain and punish their piratical raids from northern Africa upon Christians and Christian commerce. Algezir, the modern Algeciras on the west coast of the bay of Gibraltar, was one of their most important strongholds and for two years stubbornly resisted the siege maintained by Alfonso of Castile with the aid of earls and barons and men-at-arms from the whole Christian world.¹ It is not strange, therefore, that when it finally fell in the spring of 1344, King Edward of England sent to Alfonso a letter of elaborate and jubilant congratulation, a copy of which is still preserved in the Archives of England and published in Rymer's *Foedera*.² That Englishmen took part in the siege and were present at the surrender we know to be a fact and not one of Chaucer's poetic fictions. The collection of ancient documents just

¹ "Erst als ein neuer Krieg mit den Mauren den christlichen Staaten der Halbinsel grosse Gefahren brachte, kam es zu einem Frieden mit Portugal, indem Alfons XI. versprach, Eleonore de Guzman zu entfernen und seine Gemahlin als Königin zu behandeln." (Schlosser, *Weltgeschichte*, VIII, 376.) "Schon hatte der König von Granada im Bunde mit den afrikanischen Mauren eine castilische Flotte vernichtet und die Belagerung von Tarifa begonnen, als unter Vermittelung des Papstes die drei Könige von Aragonien, Castilien, und Portugal mit ihrer in Kämpfen geübten Ritterschaft die Mauren gemeinschaftlich angriffen, und am Flüsschen Salado (unweit Algeziras) im Oct. 1340 einen grossen Sieg über sie gewannen, welcher die Macht derselben dauernd schwächte." (*ib.* 376.) "Es bedurfte indessen noch mehre Kämpfe zu See und Land, ehe Algeziras sich im J. 1344 ergab und ein 10jähriger Waffenstillstand geschlossen wurde. Die Eroberung jener Stadt an der Westseite der Bay von Gibraltar war der Glanzpunkt der Regierung Alfons' XI., doch hatte die zweijährige Belagerung derselben auch den Anlass zu Einführung einer den Mauren nachgeahmten Steuer, der Alcala, gegeben." — Assmann, *Gesch. des Mittelalters*, IV, 239.

² V, 415 (orig. ed.). The letter dated May 30, 1344, is headed: Ad Regem Castellae, super Aigezira Conquistata, Gratulatoria.

cited contains a letter of credence¹ dated August 30, 1343, in favor of Henry, Earl of Derby, and William de Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, to Alfonso, King of Castile. The letters of protection for the men who accompanied these earls seem not to have been preserved, but we may presume that the train of each consisted of about thirty men, as similar letters for the trains of Arundel and Derby issued in March, 1344, provide respectively for twenty-nine and thirty-two men.²

Whether the expeditions in the African kingdom of Belmarye occurred before or after the siege of Algezir, we have no means of knowing. Rymer³ prints a letter, dated June 12, 1341, from Edward to Alfonso, congratulating him on his memorable victory over the king of Belmarye (*Ad Regem Castellae, super Victoria contra Mauros sub Rege Benemerem, Memoratissima*). But after a ten years' truce other expeditions occurred in considerable numbers throughout the century, and Chaucer may have had a later one in mind for his hero.⁴

¹ *op. cit.* v, 383. On the same page will be found a "power," dated Sept. 2, for Derby and Salisbury to treat with Alphonso (Record. ed.).

² *op. cit.* (Record. ed.) III, I, 10, and II.

³ *op. cit.* (orig. ed.) v, 257.

⁴ See Froissart's account of the fears of the kings of Granada, Bellemarine, and Tramesaines immediately after the coronation of Henry the Bastard as King of Castile in 1369:

"Et amenèrent li seigneur d'Espaigne le dit bastart Henry, c'est assavoir: messires Gomes Garile, li grans maistres de Caetrave et li maistres de Saint-Jaquème, à Asturges, et le couronnèrent à roy et li fissent tout féaulté et hommaige, et le tinrent à seigneur, et li jurèrent, présent li chevalier de Franche et d'Engleterre, que jammais il ne li fauroient, ne pour morir ne le relenquiroient. Si se tinrent in Asturges environ XV jours et puis chevauchièrent viers Burs, qui s'ouvri tantost contre le roy Henri et puis s'en allèrent viers Séville; mes il s'adrecièrent parmi le royaume de Portingal, conquérant villes, chités et castiaux, ne nus ne se tenoit contre yaux, car il estoient plus de lx^m hommes, tous armés et bien montés, et avoient bien entencion ces gens, mès que il euissent soubmis le royaume de Castile en le vollenté dou roy Henry, que de passer oultre et aller ou royaumes de Grenade et de Bellemarine, et moult s'en doubtoient li Sarrazin et li royaumes de Tramesaines." — Froissart, ed. Kervyn, VII, 93.

The declaration by those who came to aid Henry against Pedro the Cruel that they wished to invade Granada and Tramesaine was of course false and a mere pretext to enter Pedro's territory:

"Les capitaines de ces gens d'armes, pour embellir leur fait, mandèrent au roy dan Piètre par leurs lettres et ung hirault que il volsist as pellerins de Dieu qui

The dates of the mortal combats in Tramissene (the modern district of Tlemçen in western Algeria) are also, of course, under the circumstances, unascertainable. The nature of them, however, we may infer with some degree of probability from an interesting passage in Froissart. They were apparently not combats in which he and his opponent were engaged alone. Let us hear Froissart's account of a challenge of a later date, when the army of the Christians (mainly the French) was besieging the City of Africa in 1390:—

“The besiegers and their enemies studied day and night how they could most effectually annoy each other. Agadinquor Oliferne, Madifer de Tunis, Belins Maldages, and Brahadin de Bugia, and some other Saracens, consulted together, and said: ‘Here are our enemies the Christians encamped before us, and we cannot defeat them. They are so few in number when compared to us, that they must be well advised by their able captains; for, in all our skirmishes, we have never been able to make one knight prisoner. If we could capture one or two of their leaders, we should acquire fame, and learn from them the state of their army and what are their intentions. Let us now consider how we may accomplish this.’ Agadinquor replied, ‘Though I am the youngest, I wish to speak first.’ ‘We agree to it,’ said the others. ‘By my faith,’ continued he, ‘I am very desirous of engaging them; and I think, if I were matched in equal combat with one of my size, I should conquer him. If you will, therefore, select ten valiant men, I will challenge the Christians to send the same number to fight with us. We have justice on our side in this war, for they have quarrelled with us without reason; and this right and the courage I feel, induce me to believe that we shall have the victory.’ Madifer de Tunis, who was a very valiant man, said: ‘Agadinquor, what you have pro-

empris avoient d'aler en Grenade et en Bellemarine, pour destruire et guerrier les incrédules et exauchier le foy de Dieu, aministrer vivres et ouvrir son país ettant faire que on eüst cause de s'en louer.” — Kervyn, xvii, 425.

Pedro was accused of being in league with the kings of Granada, Bellemarine, and Tramesainnes; cf. Froissart, *Johnes' transl.*, bk. i. capp. ccxxx, and ccxlv. The references to these Moorish kingdoms in Froissart are numerous, see Kervyn's Index.

posed is much to your honor. To-morrow, if you please, you shall ride as our chief toward the camp of the Christians, taking an interpreter with you, and make a signal that you have something to say. If you be well received by them, propose your combat of ten against ten. We shall then hear what answer they give: and, though I believe the offer will be accepted, we must take good counsel how we proceed against these Christians, whom we consider as more valiant than ourselves.'

"This being determined on, they retired to rest. On the morrow, as usual, they advanced to skirmish; but Agadinquor rode on at some distance in front with his interpreter. The day was bright and clear, and a little after sunrise the Saracens were ready for battle. Sir Guy and sir William de la Tremouille had commanded the guard of the night, and were on the point of retiring, when the Saracens appeared in sight about three bow-shots distant. Agadinquor and his interpreter advanced toward one of the wings, and made signs to give notice that he wanted to parley with some one; by accident, he came near the pennon of a good squire-at-arms called Affrenal, who, noticing his signs, rode forward apace, and told his men to remain as they were, 'for that he would go and see what the Saracen wanted: he has an interpreter with him, and is probably come to make some proposition.' His men remained steady, and he rode toward the Saracen.

"When they were near each other, the interpreter said, 'Christian, are you a gentleman, of name in arms, and ready to answer what shall be asked of you?' 'Yes,' replied Affrenal, 'I am: speak what you please, it shall be answered.' 'Well,' said the interpreter, 'here is a noble man of our country who demands to combat with you bodily; and, if you would like to increase the number to ten, he will bring as many of his friends to meet you. The cause for the challenge is this: They maintain, that their faith is more perfect than yours; for it has continued since the beginning of the world, when it was written down; and that your faith has been introduced by a mortal, whom the Jews hung and crucified.' 'Ho,' interrupted Affrenal, 'be silent on these

matters, for it does not become such as thee to dispute concerning them; but tell the Saracen, who has ordered thee to speak, to swear on his faith that such a combat shall take place, and he shall be gratified within four hours. Let him bring ten gentlemen, and of name in arms, on his side, and I will bring as many to meet him.' The interpreter related to the Saracen the words that had passed, who seemed much rejoiced thereat, and pledged himself for the combat.

"This being done, each returned to his friends; but the news had already been carried to sir Guy and to sir William de la Tremouille, who, meeting Affrenal, demanded how he had settled matters with the Saracen. Affrenal related what you have heard, and that he had accepted the challenge. The two knights were well pleased, and said, 'Affrenal, go and speak to others, for we will be of your number ten.' He replied, 'God assist us! I fancy I shall find plenty ready to fight the Saracens.' Shortly after, Affrenal met the lord de Thim, to whom he told what had passed, and asked if he would make one. The lord de Thim willingly accepted the offer; and of all those to whom Affrenal related it, he might, if he pleased, have had a hundred instead of ten. Sir Boucicaut the younger accepted it with great courage, as did sir Helion de Lignac, sir John Russel, an Englishman, sir John Harpedone, Alain Boudet and Bouchet. When the number of ten was completed, they retired to their lodgings to prepare and arm themselves. When the news of this combat was spread through the army, and the names of the ten were told, the knights and squires said, 'they are lucky fellows, thus to have such a gallant feat of arms fall to their lot.' 'Would to Heaven,' added many, 'that we were of the ten.'" — *Johnes' transl.*, bk. iv, cap. xxii; *Kervyn*, xiv, 241 ff.

Combats such as this were, we may believe, the three which Chaucer credits to his hero, with the addition that he had "aye slain his foo."

The campaigns of the second group are apparently all connected more or less directly with Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus and Jerusalem, and the famous capture of Alexandria. The siege of Alexandria though not long continued,

being indeed an assault rather than a siege, was one of the most spectacular events of the century that witnessed the splendid victories of Crécy and Poitiers. The city itself was currently believed in the west to surpass all the other cities in the world each in its peculiar excellence. Those who had seen it declared it to be larger than London, more beautiful than Paris, and richer than Genoa or Venice. Although the assault upon it was sudden and the capture a matter of only a few days, the event had long been prepared for. In October, 1362, the King of Cyprus began a journey through Europe, lasting nearly two years, in the vain attempt to organize the European sovereigns in a crusade against the Saracens.¹ He was himself a most picturesque and attractive figure. He was in the prime of his strength and beauty and endowed with talents of no mean order. Everywhere he was received with princely hospitality and loaded with more than princely gifts of gold and jewels. Everywhere he made friends by his charming personality, his courtesy, his intellectual brilliance, his courage and success in numberless tourneys. He visited the Pope, the kings of France and England, the Emperor, the courts of Franconia, Misnia, Saxony, Bohemia, Poland, Austria. Few were willing to aid him officially, but all were ready to approve his undertaking and to allow their subjects to enlist with him if they wished. Froissart's account of the attitude of King Edward of England may serve to indicate the caution, expressed or unexpressed, of many : —

“It would take me a day were I to attempt relating to you the grand dinners, suppers, and other feasts and entertainments that were made, and the magnificent presents, gifts and jewels, which were given, especially by queen Philippa, to the accomplished king of Cyprus. In truth, he was deserving of them, for he had come a long way and at a great expense, to visit them, to exhort the king to put on the red cross and assist them in regaining countries now occupied by the enemies of God. But the king of England politely

¹ For the character of Pierre and his spectacular tour through Europe in behalf of his crusade, see the many chapters devoted to the subject by Froissart.

and wisely excused himself, by saying: 'Certainly, my good cousin, I have every inclination to undertake this expedition; but I am growing too old, and shall leave it to my children. I make no doubt, that when it shall have been begun, you will not be alone, but will be followed most willingly by my knights and squires.' 'Sir,' replied the king of Cyprus, 'what you say satisfies me. I verily believe they will come, in order to serve God, and do good to themselves; but you must grant them permission so to do; for the knights of your country are eager in such expeditions.' 'Yes,' answered the king of England, 'I will never oppose such a work, unless some things should happen to me or to my kingdom which I do not at this moment foresee.' The king of Cyprus could never obtain anything more from King Edward in respect to this croisade; but, as long as he remained, he was politely and honorably feasted with a variety of grand suppers."—Johnes' transl., bk. i, cap. ccxviii; Kervyn, vi, 384 f.

Many earls and barons and men-at-arms from all parts of Europe did flock to his standard, and, with the aid of the Pope and the Knights Hospitallers, his fleet sailed from Rhodes in September, 1365, on a crusade directed against some unknown point in the East. Pierre himself had not decided upon the exact point of attack, but during the voyage, at the suggestion of one of his council, he determined to try to capture Alexandria by a sudden attack. On Tuesday, October 9, he anchored before the city, and two days later had complete possession of it. The victory was signalized by many notable feats of arms, chief among them those of the king himself, and was celebrated in a poem of nearly nine thousand lines, by Guillaume de Machaut,¹ Chaucer's contemporary, and, to a certain degree, one of his masters in the art of poetry. Less voluminous, but hardly less enthusiastic, accounts of it are given by many chroniclers.² It made upon

¹ Guillaume de Machaut, *La Prise d'Alexandrie ou Chronique du roi Pierre Ier de Lusignan*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie. The notes of this volume and of the *Histoire de Chypre* by the same scholar give numerous references for all matters concerning Pierre.

² See especially the Cypriote chronicles of Amadi, Strambaldi, and Bustron (all published in the *Coll. des Doc. Inéd. sur l' Histoire de France*), and Phillippe

the minds of the men of the time an impression not altogether unlike that made in our own day by the Russo-Japanese naval battle of Tshushima.

With this brilliant event are associated, in this second group of campaigns, the successes at Lyeys and at Satalye¹ and probably also the service under the Lord of Palátye "ageyn another hethen in Turkye." Satalye, the ancient Attalia in Asia Minor, was one of the strongest fortresses in the east and a constant menace to Cyprus. The date of its capture from its Saracen lord was, however, not 1352, as is commonly stated, but August, 1361.² As this was prior to the visit to Europe made by Pierre in behalf of his crusade, we must infer that Chaucer's gentil knight had sought the east before the east sought him. It is possible, if not indeed probable, that Chaucer conceived him to have been a member of the company attending the Count of Hereford, who is recorded to have been with Pierre on the expedition against

de Maizières, *Vie de Pierre de Thomas* (*Acta Sanct.* Bolland.), 29 Jan. vol. II. Kervyn (xx, 566) says of Pierre: "Denis Sauvage lui a consacré la note suivante: 'Messire Philippe de Mésières, chevalier, chancelier de Pierre de Lusignan, roy de Cypre (duquel l'histoire fait cy mention), fit escrire dudict roy de Cypre sur sa tombe qui est au chapitre des Célestins de Paris, ce qui s'ensuit: Pierre de Lusignan, quinziesme roy latin de Hierusalem, après Godefroy de Bouillon, et roy de Cypre, par sa grand prouesse et haute emprise, prit par bataille et à ses frais les cités d'Alexandrie in Egypte, Triple en Surie, Layas en Arménie, Satalie en Turquie et plusieurs autres cités et chasteaux sur les ennemis de la foy Jésu-Christ. *Anima ejus requiescat in pace.*'"

¹ Skeat, quoting Tyrwhitt, rightly identifies Lyeys with Layas (modern Ayas) and Satalye with Attalia (modern Adalia). The former is not to be confounded with Alaia, Allagia (modern Alaia) which was commonly known to Europeans in the Middle Ages as Candelore or Scandeloro. Candelore, which lies in the Gulf of Satalye (Adalia), delivered its keys to Pierre in 1361 immediately after the capture of Satalye, but rebelled during his absence in Europe and, according to Amadi (p. 415) and Bustron (p. 263), was recaptured by an expedition sent by Pierre under the leadership of Messer Piero Mustri, though Strambaldi (p. 71) and Machaut (vv. 3988 ff.) speak of the expedition as unsuccessful. For the capture of Lyeys (Lajazzo on the Gulf of Alexandrette or Iskanderun) see below.

² Skeat (note on Prol. 56-58) quotes Tyrwhitt as authority for the statement that Satalye was taken by Pierre "soon after 1352." But none of the chroniclers record this event. The real date seems to have been August, 1361; cf. Amadi, p. 411, Strambaldi, p. 47, Bustron, p. 259 f., and Machaut, vv. 641-660.

Satalye, as well as in the attack on Alexandria.¹ Apparently the knight found the east to his liking, for he took part, as Chaucer tells us, in the capture of Lyeys — a strongly fortified city and harbor on the coast of Armenia the Lesser — which Pierre took from its Turkish lord in 1367, according to the Cypriote chronicle of Strambaldi, though Machaut seems to have thought the expedition unsuccessful.² At what time we are to place the service under the lord of Palatye “ageyn another hethen in Turkye” is doubtful. In 1365, according to Strambaldi (p. 66), the lord of Palatye was a heathen bound in friendly treaty and doing homage to Pierre de Lusignan. How long this remained the case I have been unable to discover.³

¹ That the Earl (or Count) of Hereford was at Satalye is a part of the testimony of Sir Richard Waldegrave given below, p. 106. That he took part in the siege of Alexandria we learn from Machaut, v. 6794, and the letter of Florimont de Lesparre to Pierre, given by Machaut, p. 228 ff. For the presence of other Englishmen at the siege of Alexandria, see the quotation from Philippe de Mai-zières given by de Mas Latrie, *La Prise d'Alexandrie*, pp. 281-282. Amadi (p. 410) says that in 1360 Pierre made “Messer Roberto Tulassan, cavalier englese,” captain of the fortress of Curico (or Gorhigos, or Courc), which had been abandoned by Livon of Armenia when he fled to Europe. The same statement, with different forms of the name of the captain, is made by Strambaldi, Bustron, and Machera, according to the editor's note in Amadi. According to Nicholas Sabraham, one of the Scropes was with Pierre at Alexandria; see below, p. 105.

² See Strambaldi, p. 84, and Machaut, vv. 7008-7113, both of which accounts make it clear that Pierre took the city but could not take the land fortress. For a description of Lyeys (Alayas, Lajazzo, Agiasso) see Machaut, vv. 6964 ff. In Amadi and Bustron there is no mention of the attack on Lyeys, though the other towns taken in this campaign are mentioned.

³ In 1385, according to Livon, King of Armenia, the lord of Palatye was a Christian doing homage to Amurath the Turk, as was also the lord of Satalye; cf. Froissart, ed. Buchon, bk. III, chap. xxv (Johnes' transl. III, 23):

“L'Amorath-Bakin est un sire de noble condition, et si il étoit plus jeune trente ans que il n'est, il seroit taillé de moult faire grands conquêtes là où il se voudroit traire; car, quand il a conquis un pays ou une ville ou une seigneurie, il n'en demande que l'hommage; il laisse ceux en leur créance, ni oncques ne bouta, ni jà ne fera, homme hors de son héritage. Il n'en demande que à avoir la souveraine domination. Pourquoi je dis que, si il eût conquis le royaume d'Arménie, si comme les Tartres ont fait, il m'eût tenu en paix, et mon royaume en notre foi et en notre loi, parmi la reconnaissance que je lui eusse faite de le tenir à souverain seigneur, si comme hauts barons qui marchissent à lui font, qui sont Grecs et Chrétiens, qui l'ont pris à souverain seigneur pour leur ôter hors de

The third and last group of campaigns we must dispose of more rapidly. All of them belong to the operations of the Knights of the Teutonic Order, whose chief seat was then Marienburg in Prussia. This order, founded at Jerusalem in 1128 by the German Crusaders, removed to Venice and by 1283 had become master of all the territory in north Europe between the Vistula and the Niemen. In 1309 they removed their headquarters to Marienburg, but had Königsberg also as an important centre of operations. Their especial task was to defend the Christian border against the Lithuanians and the Tartars, the latter of whom were masters of most of Russia. The task was difficult and practically incessant.¹ No data are given us by Chaucer for determining the time of the knight's visits. We have records of visits there by some Englishmen in 1362,² but our hero seems then to have been in the Orient. A time of equal stress for the Teutonic Order began in 1385, when, according to Assmann, many foreign knights came to their aid. We may well believe that this later period was the time of the knight's campaigns. In support of this, we may note in the first place, that Chaucer says that in Prussia the knight was often given the highest seat at the table — "began the bord" — in recognition of his distinguished character and services.³ He was, therefore, probably

la doute du soudan et du Cakem de Tartarie." — "Et qui sont cils seigneurs," fut-il demandé au roi d'Arménie? "Je vous dirai," dit-il, "tout premièrement le sire de Saptalie y est, et puis le grand sire de la Palati et tiercement le sire de Hauteloge. Ces trois seigneurs et leurs terres, parmi le treu que il lui rendent tous les ans, demeurent en paix; et n'est Turc ni Tartre qui mal leur fasse."

Palatye (modern Palatia or Balat) lies on the west coast of Smyrna, on the site of the ancient Miletus.

¹ On the Teutonic Order see Helyot, *Dict. des Ordres*, III, 624 ff., *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1879), XXXII, 319-340, 791-817, *Hist. Zs.* x, 430-449, XIII, 229-260.

² See the testimony of John de Rither, below, p. 105. The siege of Wellon there referred to is apparently that of Wilna; cf. Assmann, *Gesch. des. MA.* IV, 369. On Feb. 5, 1363, a safe-conduct was issued by the English government to David de Berclay of Scotland, going to Prussia, and on Feb. 20 one to Thomas earl of Marr. (Rymer, *Record ed.* III, ii, 687.) Others are recorded at various dates.

³ The character of the Grand-Master of the Teutonic Order and the men he gathered about him may serve to emphasize the distinction accorded to the

not a young knight at the time in question. If he fought first in 1344 at Algezir, he was probably in 1387, the supposed date of the *Canterbury Tales*, between sixty and sixty-five. Obviously he was not so old as to be ready to retire, for, says

knight. From 1351 to 1382 the Grand-Master was Winrich von Kniprode, who, according to Assmann, p. 367, was chosen unanimously, "ein Mann, dem — selbst seit Hermann v. Salza — kein anderer Ordensmeister an Tüchtigkeit gleichgekommen ist. . . .

"Er selbst war von grosser stattlicher Gestalt, besass alle Eigenschaften eines Helden und Regenten, hatte aber auch einen Kreis von ausgezeichneten Männern in seiner Umgebung.

"Bei Antritt seiner Regierung wiesen ihn schwere Heimsuchungen des Landes auf eine um so ernstere Sorge für dasselbe hin. Im J. 1351 wüthete ein furchtbarer Orkan über Danzig, so dass 60 Schiffe in dessen Hafen scheiterten; die noch zwei Jahre wüthende Pest zerrüttete das Familien- und Bürgerleben, wie Gewerthätigkeit und Handel. Zur Sühne des erzürnten Himmels erhoben sich in Preussen nicht, wie anderswo, Schaaren von Flagellanten, sondern Kriegsheere zur Erneuerung des Bekehrungskampfes gegen die heidnischen Litthauer. Aber der Angriff d. J. 1352 schlug in Folge eintretenden Thauwetters und starker Regengüsse völlig fehl, und zur Erwiderung desselben wurde Samland von den Fürsten Olgerd und Kynstutte grässlich verheert. Seitdem war es des Hochmeisters erstes Bemühen, einerseits den entvölkerten Landstrichen durch mancherlei Begünstigungen aufzuhelfen, andererseits durch neue Ordnungen der Ausbildung der Ritter wie der zu grösserer Bedeutung gelangten Städtebürger ein höheres Ziel zu stecken. Vor Allem erkannte er als nothwendig, die Bürger zum Waffendienst heranzuziehen, sowohl zu ihrer eigenen Vertheidigung, als um einen festen Kern für die Kriegsmacht des Landes zu gewinnen. Hiezu führte er in allen Städten die Sitte des Vogel- und Scheibenschliessens mit Ehrenpreisen ein. Die Ritter aber hielt er nicht nur durch strenge Zucht zu einem sittlichen Lebenswandel an, sondern sorgte auch dafür, dass dieselben sich in Friedenszeiten die für die höheren Aemter nöthige Bildung aneigneten. So sollte forthin jedes Ordenshaus in Preussen mit zwei gelehrten Ordensbrüdern versehen sein, deren einer in der Theologie, der andere in der Rechtskunde bewandert wäre. Die Pflanzschule für diese höhere Bildung sollte das Haupthaus zu Marienburg sein, wohin deshalb die berühmtesten Gelehrten aus Deutschland und Italien zu Begründung einer Art von Rechtsschule berufen wurden. Bald erstaunte das Ausland über den Erfolg solcher Bestrebungen, und das preussische 'Consistorium von rechtserfahrenen Männern' wurde von fremden Fürsten und Städten, besonders auch aus Deutschland, in verwickelten Streitfällen zu Rathe gezogen. Im Lande selbst aber wurde die Gerechtigkeit, überall auf feste Grundsätze gestützt, in einem Masse wie fast nirgend sonst gehandhabt" (pp. 367-368).

"Der Wiederausbruch der Pest, wie das Vertrauen auf einige ihm eben von Paderborn übersandte Reliquien des h. Liborius ermunterten den Ordensmeister — der in seiner religiösen Bildung keineswegs über seiner Zeit stand — im J. 1360 zu einem Kriegszuge gegen Litthauen, bei welchem der kühne Ordensmarschall Henning Schindekopff die Anführung erhielt; doch rief diesen der Versuch des

Chaucer, "he was late ycome from his viage" — the technical term for a military expedition. And this suggests the second reason for dating his career in Pruce, Lettow, and Ruce, or at least one of his campaigns there,¹ immediately before his pilgrimage to Canterbury, namely that, inasmuch as he joined the pilgrims in London, he had not landed at Dover or any port in Kent, but perhaps at some northern port lying nearer to Prussia.² This is of course not conclusive, for, had he been returning from the Orient, he would perhaps have landed at Dartmouth or some other west of England port, as ships from the Orient usually did. But the question of date is not of serious import to our discussion.

Königs Kasimir, an seiner Landesgränze eine Burg (Raigrod) zu erbauen, zum Kampfe gegen den polnischen Nachbar, welcher bald in die Schranken gewiesen wurde. Nach mehren minder bedeutenden Zügen gegen Lithauen gelang es zwar im J. 1361, den Grossfürsten Kynstute durch Ueberfall in Gefangenschaft zu bringen, doch entfloh dieser alsbald und setzte zur Rache den Krieg mit desto grösserer Festigkeit fort; und als im J. 1362 die Burg Kauen, eine Feste der Litthauer am Zusammenfluss der Wilia und Men., genommen war, wodurch die Hauptstadt Wilna ihren stärksten Schutz verlor, nahm der Kampf von beiden Seiten einen immer hartnäckigeren Charakter an (p. 369).

"Jahre lang musste freilich unter diesen Verhältnissen der Hochmeister seine Sorge für das Innere des Landes hintansetzen; aber bei den Zeitgenossen stieg sein Ruhm wegen des beharrlichen Kampfes gegen die Heiden immer höher; Pabst und Kaiser erkannten das 'glorreiche' Verdienst des Ordens an, dass er den letzten Rest des Heidenthums in jenem östlichen Winkel Europa's völlig zu vertilgen strebe" (p. 370).

"Nie waren um einen Meister des Ordens so viele Thränen vergossen, als bei Winrich's Tode. Unter den Geschichtsschreibern seiner Zeit ist nur eine Stimme seines Ruhmes; wenn aber diese vor Allem seinen oft mit Grausamkeit geführten Bekehrungskämpfen gegen die Litthauer gilt, so hat ihn die Neuzeit um so mehr als friedlichen Leiter des Ordens und als Landesvater gewürdigt. Denn niemals hatte der Orden in der Meinung der Welt so hoch gestanden, als zu seiner Zeit, und dieses war eben so wohl seiner trefflichen Wahl der Ordensgebietiger wie seiner strengen Ueberwachung der Ordensregel zu danken. Daher das Zeugniß der fremden Kriegsgäste: 'dass sie in keinem Lande so viel wohlgestalteter Leute an Alter und Weisheit gesehen hätten, als im Orden zu Preussen'" (p. 377).

The most important campaigns of the Order in Lettow and Ruce were those of 1357, 1360-62, 1369, 1375, 1381, 1385 (Assmann, pp. 369-381).

¹ The words of Chaucer — "*ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne*" — suggest that the knight had taken part in more than one of the campaigns.

² In consequence of the negotiations of 1385 free entry to all the ports of England was granted to the towns of Prussia; cf. Assmann, IV, 379.

We have thus far seen that Chaucer's knight was probably between sixty and sixty-five, that he began his military career in the early forties while Chaucer was still an infant, and consequently would have been a man of mature years and doubtless of much reputation when Chaucer himself as a young squire was in France with the army in 1359, and further, that, although the battles and expeditions ascribed to him are among the most brilliant and adventurous of the age, they fall naturally into three great groups of campaigns. One is tempted to inquire further whether in conceiving his knight Chaucer merely endowed him with the most notable campaigns of the age or whether he may have had in mind one or more men who more or less closely approximated the experiences and exploits of the knight. Chance has provided us with an interesting set of documents which suggest that, though Chaucer may not have given us in the knight a portrait of one of his own friends, he at least knew men of the exact type he has drawn with such affectionate skill.

In 1386, by the order of the crown, testimony was taken to decide a dispute between the Yorkshire family of Scrope and the Chester family of Grosvenor as to which had the right to the arms Azure, a bend Or, which both bore and claimed. Chaucer himself was one of the witnesses in favor of Scrope, and his testimony on this occasion is our principal datum for the time of his birth. Some persons testified concerning tombs and stained windows and other monuments of ancient date that bore the arms in question as those of one or the other claimant. Most of the witnesses, however, were knights and esquires, who testified to the occasions when they had seen the said arms borne publicly in battle or elsewhere. The testimonies by no means give complete sketches of the military careers of the witnesses, but since some of the Scropes themselves nearly duplicated the career of the knight, we get in them hints as to the possibilities of an approximate model among these men whom Chaucer knew. Let us take first the testimony of Nicholas Sabraham, Esq.¹

¹ This and the other testimonies in the Scrope-Grosvenor case are given in the edition of the roll published by Sir Harris Nicolas. The first volume contains

“Nicholas Sabraham, Esquire, aged sixty and upwards, armed thirty-nine years, said that the arms Azure, a bend Or, were the arms of Sir Richard Scrope, for he had seen the arms of Scrope on banner and coat-armour in the expedition of Sir Edward Balliol in Scotland, also on a banner in the company of the Earl of Northampton, when he chivauchied by torchlight out of Loghmaban as far as Peebles, and had in his company Sir Henry Scrope with his banner. The Deponent also said, that in the assemblage from all Christian countries at the instance of the King of Cyprus, when he meditated his expedition to Alexandria in ships and galleys, one Sir Stephen Scrope was present, armed in the arms of Scrope, Azure, a bend Or, with a label Argent for difference, and immediately on landing, received in those arms the order of Knighthood from the King of Cyprus. He further said that he was armed in Prussia, in Hungary, at Constantinople, ‘à la bras’ of Saint George, and at Messembré, at which latter place there is a church, and therein lieth one of the Scropes buried, and beneath him there are depicted on the wall the arms of Scrope, Azure, a bend Or, with a label, and on the label three ‘bezants Gules:’ he knew them to be the arms of Scrope, and to have borne that name, because the wardens of the said church told him so. The Deponent saw Sir Henry Scrope armed in France with a banner in the company of the Earl of Northampton, and Sir William Scrope, elder brother of the said Sir Richard, in the same company, armed in the entire arms, or with differences, at the battle of Cressy, at the siege of Calais, in Normandy, in Brittany, in Gascony, and in Spain, and beyond the great sea in many places and at many chivalrous exploits: in those places he never heard speak of Sir Robert Grosvenor or of any of his ancestors” (p. 323).

“John de Rither, Esquire, aged sixty-six, armed since the time when the late King made his chivauche to Burenfos in Picardy, deposed that the arms Azure, a bend Or, belonged to the family of Scrope by inheritance. . . . Afterwards the

the documents, the second contains translations of them and Nicolas’s introduction and notes. I quote the translations, giving the page references to vol. II.

noble King made his expedition before Paris: Sir Henry was there with his banner, and the present Sir Richard Scrope was there also, armed in the entire arms, in the company of the Earl of Richmond; Sir Geoffrey Scrope being then armed in the same with a difference, in company of the late Lord of Lancaster. After that expedition peace was made, when Sir Geoffrey Scrope went, with other knights, into Prussia, and there, in an affair at the siege of Wellon in Lithuania, he died in these arms, and was buried in the Cathedral of Königsberg, where the said arms are painted in a glass window, which the Deponent himself caused to be set up, taking the blazon from the arms which the deceased had upon him" (p. 358).

"Sir Richard Waldegrave, aged forty-eight, armed twenty-five years, deposed that the arms Azure, a bend Or, belonged to the Scropes, who were reputed to be of ancient lineage, as he had heard, in the lifetime of the Earl of Northampton. He saw Sir Richard so armed in the expedition of the late King before Paris, and at the same time Sir Henry Scrope with his banner, on which were the said arms with a white label. And also beyond the great sea he saw Sir William Scrope so armed, with a label, in the company of the Earl of Hereford at Satalia in Turkey, at a treaty which was concluded between the King of Cyprus and 'le Takka,' Lord of Satalia, when the King of Cyprus became Lord of Satalia" (p. 377).

"Sir Henry de Ferrers, aged forty-six, armed thirty years, deposed that he never heard of any one who had so good right to the arms Azure, a bend Or, as Sir Richard Scrope, and the other branches of his family. He said that he saw Sir Geoffrey Scrope, the son of Sir Henry, so armed in Brittany; also the said Sir Geoffrey so armed in Prussia, and afterwards in Lithuania, before a castle called Piskre, and that he there died, and from thence his body was brought back into Prussia and interred, in the same arms, in the cathedral of Königsberg, where they were placed on a tablet, as a memorial, before the altar. The Deponent saw Sir Henry Scrope before Paris, with his banner, and his body so armed with a white label, and Sir Richard Scrope with the

arms entire. The said Sir Geoffrey Scrope was then armed in the company of the late Lord of Lancaster before Paris, and before the time that he went into Prussia" (p. 445).

The significance of these documents is so clear as hardly to need comment. Not only in details, but in its entirety, the career which Chaucer ascribes to his "gentil knight" is that which actually fell to the lot of more than one of his contemporaries and acquaintances. Sir Harris Nicolas (*The Scrope-Grosvenor Roll*, II, pp. 105 f.) goes so far as to suggest that Sir William Scrope was definitely in Chaucer's mind as he drew this famous portrait. This is perhaps an exaggeration, but we have unmistakable evidence that Chaucer was painting no picture of fancy, but giving us a figure at once realistic and typical of the noble and adventurous idealists of his day.

If you will indulge me a few seconds more, I should like to repeat a suggestion I made several years ago in regard to the sources of *The Squire's Tale*. After showing that the only literary sources suggested were out of the question — and my argument has been accepted universally — I suggested that Chaucer may have heard the story from some knight or esquire who had fought in the Orient, and promised to write some day of the possibility that he actually knew persons who might well have brought the story from the East. I hope I have in this paper redeemed my promise. I have shown you that among Chaucer's fellow-witnesses — men doubtless well known to him — are several whose opportunities for hearing and transmitting such a story were all that could be desired. It may be interesting, and perhaps not altogether without significance, to recall the well-known fact that the English translation of the romance of William of Palerne was made at the command of Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, — not the one above recorded as taking part in the capture of Satalye and Alisaundre, to be sure, but his uncle and immediate predecessor as Earl of Hereford.